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THE HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES ACTS, 1890 to 1909.



Memorandum

for the use of Local Authorities with respect to
The Provision and Arrangement of Houses for
the Working Classes.



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THE HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES ACTS, 1890 to 1909.

Memorandum

for the use of Local Authorities

with respect to The Provision and Arrangement of Houses for
the Working Classes.

1. **Object of Memorandum.**—In this Memorandum the Local Government Board have summarised their views upon certain points in regard to the provision and arrangement of houses for the working classes. It supersedes the Board's Memorandum of the 25th March, 1913, on the same subject.

2. **Class of persons for whom accommodation is to be provided.**—As a general rule experience shows that houses suitable for the accommodation of persons of the better paid working class community (who can afford to pay a rent which will provide a fair return on the capital employed) are more likely to be provided by private enterprise than houses at low rents which are necessary for the accommodation of the poorer classes. It will, therefore, frequently be the case that the efforts of the local authority will be directed mainly to the provision of houses of the latter class.

3. **Types of houses most suitable.**—The type of dwelling required in ordinary circumstances is the self-contained house. Occasionally there may be a demand for accommodation of a limited character—*e.g.*, accommodation for newly married couples or for aged persons without a family, and in such cases it may be desirable to meet the demand by the provision of two-storey houses consisting of two self-contained dwellings; but, generally, it would seem desirable to avoid the erection of blocks of buildings containing a series of tenements.

4. **Standard of Construction.**—In designing houses for the working classes the first consideration is that they shall meet the reasonable needs of the class of persons whom it is proposed to accommodate. It is desirable that simplicity of design and economy in construction and general arrangements should be aimed at, but it would be well to bear in mind that houses erected by a local authority ought generally to be such as will be a model or standard for working class dwellings which may be erected by private persons.

Moreover, if a local authority propose to borrow money to defray the cost of the erection of houses, the Board in fixing the period for the repayment of the loan could not allow the maximum period adopted by them for this purpose, namely 60 years, unless the houses were to be built substantially.

As a general rule, therefore, the standard of construction should in the Board's opinion be such that, with only a moderate annual outlay for repairs, the houses should be capable of being maintained in a state in all respects fit for human habitation for a period of at least 60 years. Special circumstances may, however, exist in some cases rendering it desirable for the local authority to construct houses of a less permanent character and to repay the loan in a much shorter period than 60 years.

5. **Selection of site.**—Due regard should be paid to the healthiness of the site and to the convenience of its situation for the prospective tenants.

The advantages or disadvantages of the site as regards levels, drainage, water supply and means of access by roads or paths should be considered in relation to the purchase price. A site which can be purchased at a low price may prove expensive to build on.

In rural areas it will frequently be possible to secure a site with a frontage to a roadway repairable by the inhabitants at large.

6. **Number of buildings and arrangement of streets and buildings on the site.**—

(a) *Generally.*—The arrangement of houses on the site and to some extent the design of the houses will depend upon the size, situation, and character of the land, but the site should be so utilised as to secure ample open space in connection with the houses and the best possible aspect for the living rooms. The latter point should be borne in mind in fixing the direction of any new streets required to be constructed.

Overcrowding of houses on a site should be avoided. Although some regard must be paid to the cost of the site and the extent to which street works will be necessary, the number of houses to be erected on each acre of land should be kept within strictly reasonable limits, and in this connection it should be borne in mind that the annual charges in respect of a loan for the land, spread over the maximum period of 80 years, would in most cases constitute a comparatively small proportion of the total annual cost of providing the houses. On the basis of 12 houses to the acre and land at £100 per acre, the loan charges per house for land purchase would only be about 2d. a week.

Landowners in some cases have expressed themselves willing to provide land for housing purposes at a nominal price or free of cost. Local authorities are empowered to accept a donation of land for these purposes under Section 8 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1909, and wherever they are able to obtain suitable land on these favourable terms they should promptly avail themselves of the opportunity.

(b) *Forecourts.*—It is desirable that houses should be set back from the street line, so as to allow small gardens or forecourts to intervene between the houses and the street.

(c) *Building in rows.*—It is undesirable that long rows of houses without a break should be constructed; and, as a rule, the number of houses in a continuous row should not exceed eight or ten. Long rows are open to objection, not only because overcrowding of houses on the site may be the result, but also because they give a monotonous and depressing appearance and prevent easy inter-communication between streets.

(d) *Back streets.*—Where houses are erected in rows, back streets may be necessary for the removal of house refuse and delivery of coals, goods, &c., and for the laying of sewers. Though back streets, if not properly controlled and lighted, may be a source of nuisance, they have the advantage, in addition to their use for sanitary purposes, of affording a second means of access to the dwellings, thereby saving objectionable traffic through the living rooms.

(e) *Detached or semi-detached cottages.*—The erection of detached or semi-detached cottages is somewhat more costly than the erection of cottages in blocks of four or more, though there may be a saving in cost by avoiding the provision of back streets. If the circumstances are such as to justify any additional expenditure involved, the erection of detached or semi-detached cottages may be of advantage. In this connection it may be observed that larger ground area and frontage will, as a rule, be more often possible in rural areas than in urban areas, and where large gardens are provided and a slightly increased rent is charged the tenants should be able to secure some return in the form of garden produce, &c.

(f) *Some suggestions as to arrangements of streets and houses on site.*—Such arrangements of streets and buildings as the following would probably reduce the expenditure on land and on street construction, viz.: (1) the formation of groups of houses on back land, access to the houses being either from comparatively narrow streets (if the houses are set well back from the street line and if the streets are not intended or likely to become important thoroughfares) or from streets of full width of which portions might be turfed or planted with trees; (2) the grouping of a number of houses round three sides of a quadrangle or other open space which would serve as

a recreation ground for the occupants of the houses (see Section 11 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1903); and (3) the formation of the street which will be the means of approach for vehicles at the back of the houses, leaving a stretch of garden ground between the fronts of the houses and a footway giving access to those fronts.

(g) *Frontage of houses.*—In the laying out and development of sites for building, the execution of street works is frequently a source of heavy expense, especially where the streets are wide and of costly construction. This produces a tendency to limit the frontages to an undesirable extent, with the result that the necessary internal space can only be obtained by making the houses deep from front to back, or with projections at the back. These methods of construction interfere with the due access of light and air to the rooms, and in order to avoid these objections the frontages should not be unduly restricted. In the case of houses containing three bedrooms on the first floor it is desirable that the frontage should in no case be less than 16 feet.

7. Accommodation to be provided and arrangement of interior and outbuildings.—*Generally.*—The house, as previously stated, should be designed to meet the reasonable needs of the prospective occupants, and the internal arrangements will, no doubt, be influenced to some extent by custom of the locality and by the habits of the population. Although the actual arrangement of the rooms may not lend itself to any great variety of planning, it is important that a sunny aspect should be selected for the living room. The dimensions of the rooms, and the arrangement of doors, windows, fireplaces, &c., need careful attention, and some suggestions in regard to these matters are made below.

Simple type of house.—The type of dwelling adapted to an average working class family should comprise a living room, three bedrooms, scullery, food store, and the necessary conveniences and out offices.

Living room.—The living room, being used by all the family in common, ought to be as large and commodious as possible, and should contain a good cupboard and dresser, and a kitchen range with a boiler for hot water supply.

Bedrooms.—Bedrooms should be as large and airy as practicable. It is desirable that one of the rooms should have a floor area of at least 132 square feet. Bedrooms which cannot be provided with a fireplace should have special ventilation. This may be provided by means of fixed louvres over the door, and the door should be at the opposite end of the room from the window. The doors, windows, and fireplaces in the bedrooms should be arranged so as to secure convenient spaces for the bed and furniture and to insure the freest circulation of air.

Scullery.—The scullery could be fitted with a gas stove, so that cooking may be done here in the summer, when the warmth of the fire is not needed in the living room.

The provision of a covered space outside the scullery, in which washing, &c., can be done, and in which the copper can if desired be placed, will be found a convenient arrangement.

Bath.—It is best to place the bath on the ground floor. The installation of a bath on the upper floor is more expensive, and is apt to cramp the bedroom space. Where possible the bath should be so screened that it can be used without closing the approach to the scullery, yard or stores. Where it is not possible to provide a bath-room a bath-scullery might be arranged. If in any case it is not proposed to provide a bath at the time of the erection of the house a “bath-space” should be planned so that a bath could be fixed at a later date without structural alterations to the building.

Hot water for the bath and sink can be supplied from a copper in the scullery, from a tank connected to a small boiler in the kitchen range, or from a copper heated by the kitchen range. Baths should be of vitreous enamelled iron, and should not be encased.

Windows.—The window area of each room should, as a rule, not be less than one-tenth of the floor area of the room; windows should be made to open, and should be so placed as to ventilate the upper as well as the lower portions of the room, and for this purpose the opening should at the top be not more than 9 inches from the ceiling.

Height of rooms.—The height of the rooms need not exceed 8 feet 6 inches, and 8 feet will suffice with good ventilation.

Staircases.—It is desirable that the staircase should be arranged so as not to be entered directly from a living room or scullery. The staircase should be well lighted and ventilated, should be furnished with a handrail, and be of an easy ascent, with risers not exceeding 8 inches.

Cellars.—Unless special circumstances necessitate their provision, it is not desirable that cellars should be provided.

Stores.—A store for food and one for fuel should be provided. A tool store will be found a useful adjunct to a house in a rural area. The food store should be well lighted and ventilated by a separate window opening into the external air, and, in order that it may be kept cool, should not be placed so as to adjoin any fireplace or chimney flue, and a sunless aspect is desirable. The size of these stores will depend mainly on the locality in which the house is built; in rural areas larger stores are generally required than in towns.

Closet accommodation.—Separate accommodation should be provided for each house, and the entrance to it should be placed outside the house. A water closet may be placed close to or built as part of the house, and access to the entrance should be under cover if possible. If an earth closet is provided it should be placed at some distance from the house unless the earth-closet is provided with a movable receptacle and so situate that it cannot be entered otherwise than from the outside of the house.

Yard.—It is desirable that there should be a paved area immediately adjoining the back of the house, and that this area should extend to the entrance to the closet.

Receptacle for house refuse.—It is desirable that the ashpit should not be fixed, but should take the form of a movable galvanised iron or enamelled iron ashbin which should be required to be kept on a convenient portion of the paved area adjoining the back of the house.

8. Materials : Walls : Floors : Doors.—The materials of which the houses should be constructed will vary according to the locality. The use of local materials generally tends towards economy. Brickwork, covered externally with rough cast or cement, is an economical form of construction, though not of such lasting quality as plain faced brickwork. Half-brick internal walls which carry the floor joists should be built in cement. Walls of habitable rooms should be finished internally in plaster, but sculleries, larders, and outbuildings, may be pointed and lime whitened.

Floors of living rooms and bedrooms should be constructed of wood, those of sculleries and outbuildings being of solid concrete finished in cement. The floors of living rooms can be constructed of deal boards either on joists or laid on concrete and nailed to fillets embedded in the concrete, but care must be taken that the concrete is absolutely dry before the boards are fixed. A layer of bituminous composition beneath the boards is desirable.

Strongly made ledged and braced doors are preferable to panelled doors of inferior quality.

9. Plans.—Annexed to this Memorandum are plans designed to meet different requirements and situations.

Plan No. 1 is a design for a simple type of house as described in Section 7 of this Memorandum. It is not advisable for a house of this design to have a north aspect.

Plan No. 2 is of a similar character to Plan No. 1, but it provides for the offices in the main building instead of in outbuildings.

Plan No. 3 is a design for a house (with somewhat similar accommodation to that provided by Plan No. 1) which secures a sunny aspect for the living room when the exigencies of the site render it necessary to front the house towards the north.

Plan No. 4 is a design for a house for a narrower frontage than Plan No. 1, the third bedroom being provided by means of an attic in the roof. There is a proportionately larger amount of bedroom space in this house.

Plans Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 9 are designs showing various arrangements for houses containing a parlour in addition to a living room. The provision of a parlour will necessarily add to the cost of the house, and consequently it should not be provided unless a sufficient rent is obtainable to justify it. It is desirable that the provision of a parlour should not lead to a reduction of the size of the living room.

Plan No. 8 is an example of a type that has been adopted in rural districts for agricultural labourers, &c. Its main recommendation is economy of construction, the roof being utilised to its utmost capacity.

The roof can be constructed either as a plain pitched roof or as a mansard which would admit of the bedrooms being of rather larger area.

Plans Nos. 10 and 11 are designs for semi-detached cottages, No. 10 without a parlour, and No. 11 with a parlour.

Plan No. 12 is a design for a type of house containing only two bedrooms.

These plans are intended to serve as a basis upon which dwellings may be designed to suit the particular circumstances for which they are required. They purposely show only suggested arrangements of rooms or other accommodation. The result of suggesting official models of elevations might be to stereotype designs to some extent, and the Board are desirous of avoiding this. They think that the general designs and elevations may best be left to be decided by local custom or wishes. In this way it is hoped that there may be full scope for variety and pleasing effect and that the dullness of uniformity may be avoided.

The cubic contents of the twelve types illustrated vary from 7,600 cubic feet to 11,300 cubic feet. The cubic contents are calculated on a measurement from the bottom of the footings to halfway up the roof, and for the purpose of the calculation the height of rooms is taken at 8 feet as shown in the section on Plan No. 1.

The approximate cost of each dwelling may be obtained by multiplying its cubic contents by the current cost per foot cube in the locality in which the dwelling is to be erected.

H. C. MONRO,

Secretary.

Local Government Board,

Whitehall,

November, 1917.

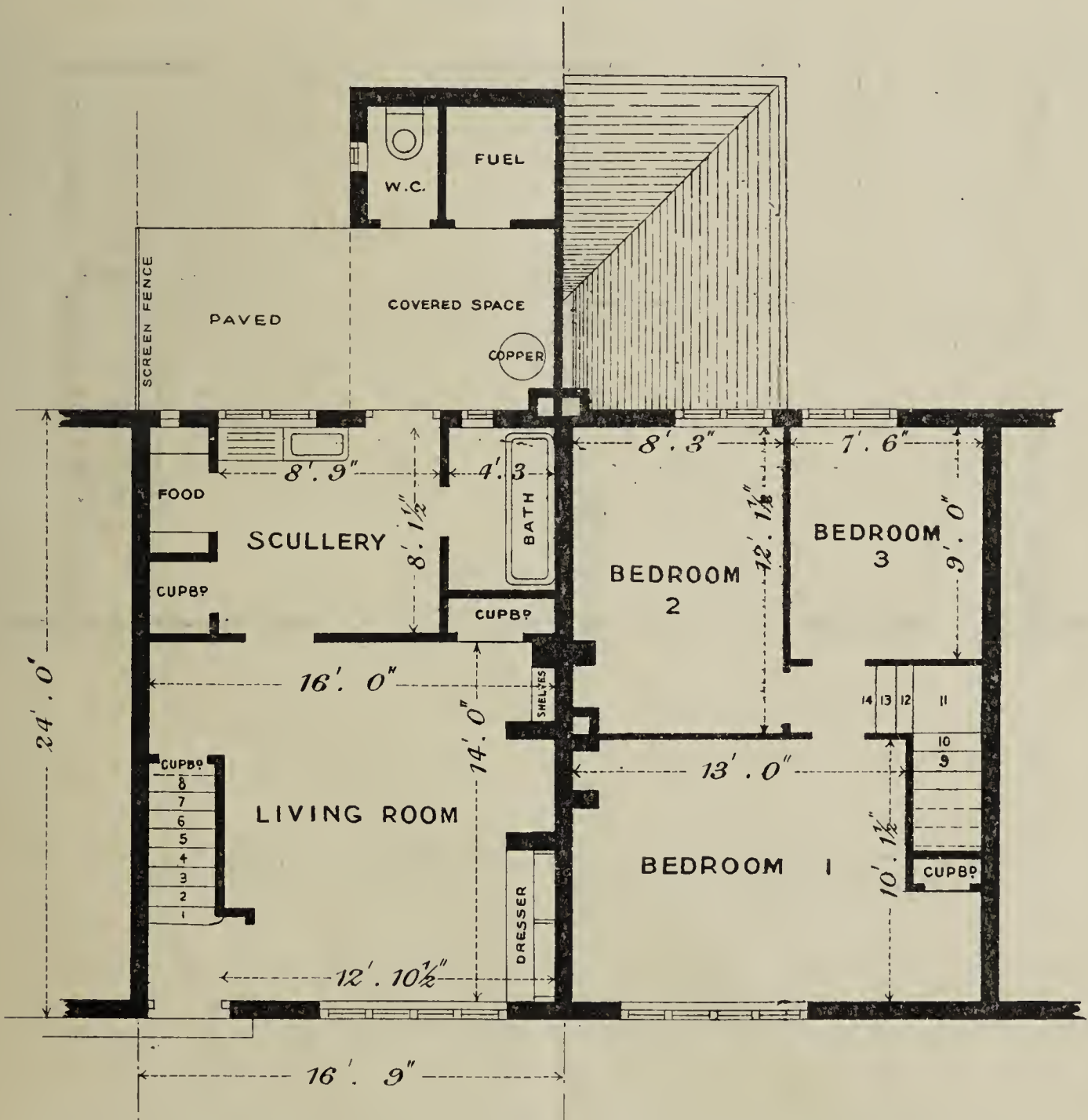
PLAN N^o 1.

CUBIC CONTENTS

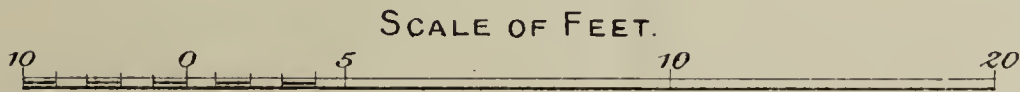
9,000 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



SECTION.

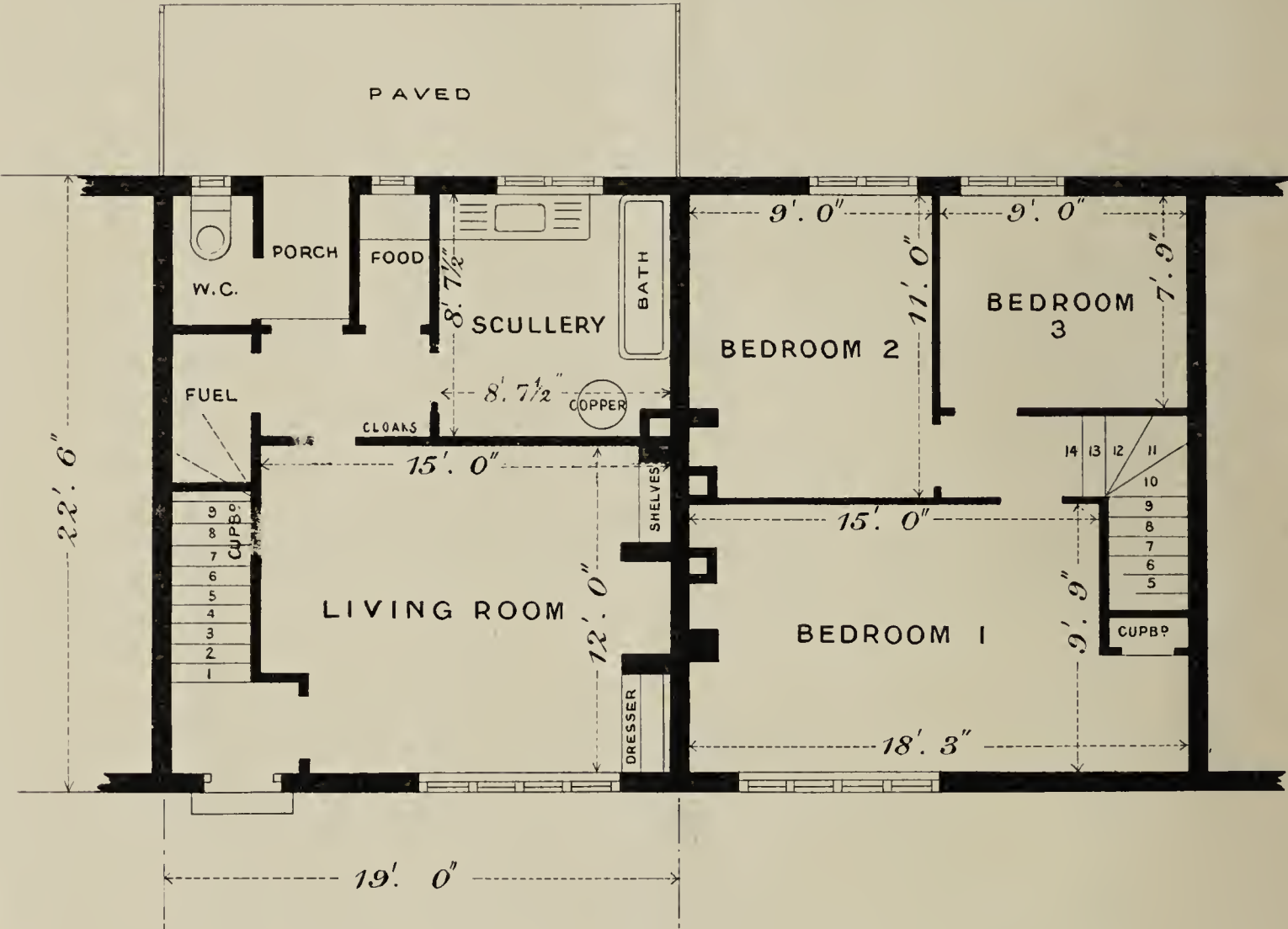


GROUND FLOOR. FIRST FLOOR.

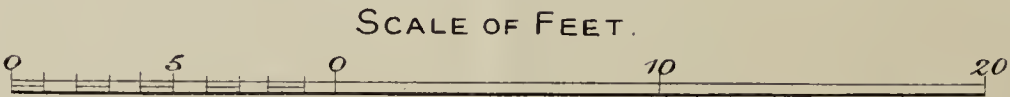


PLAN N^o 2.

CUBIC CONTENTS
9,400 FEET

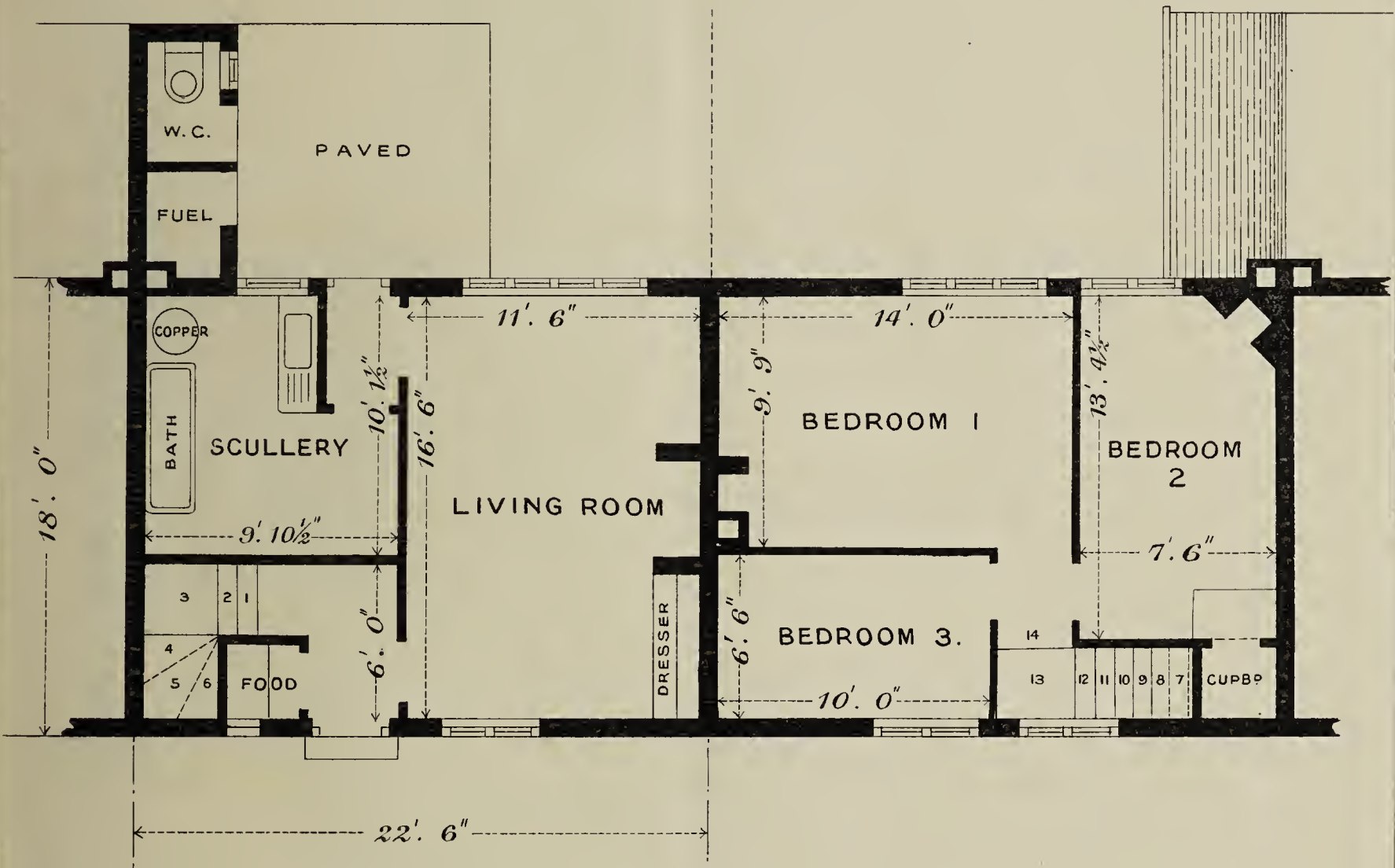


GROUND FLOOR. FIRST FLOOR.



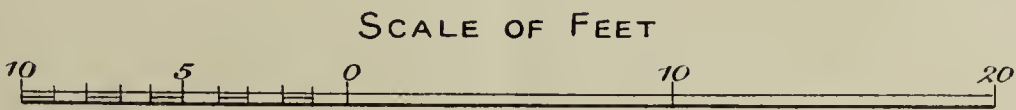
PLAN N^o 3.

CUBIC CONTENTS
8,650 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



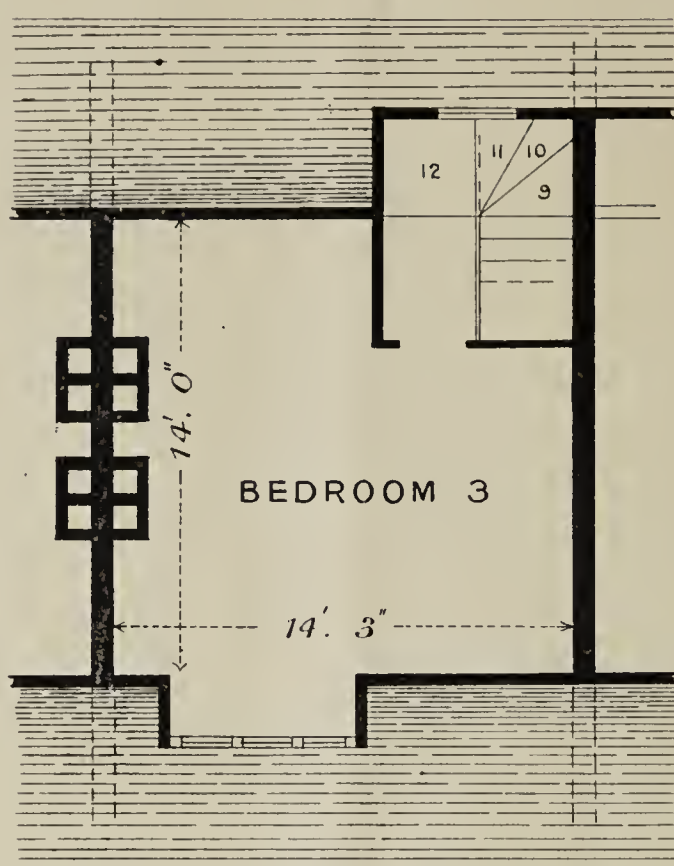
GROUND FLOOR.

FIRST FLOOR.

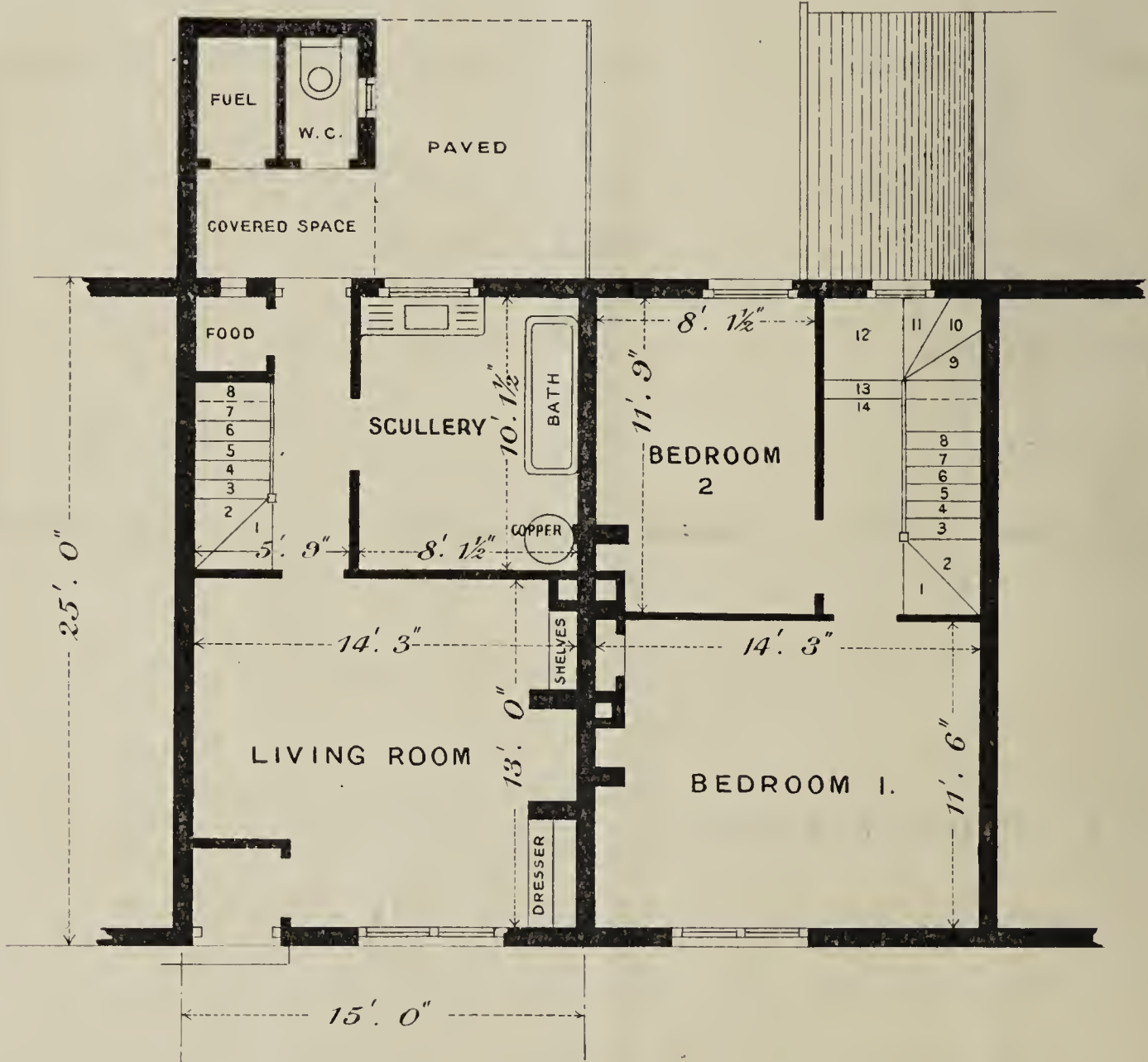


PLAN N^o 4.

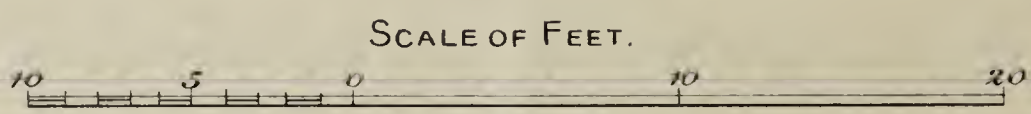
CUBIC CONTENTS
9,950 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



ROOF.

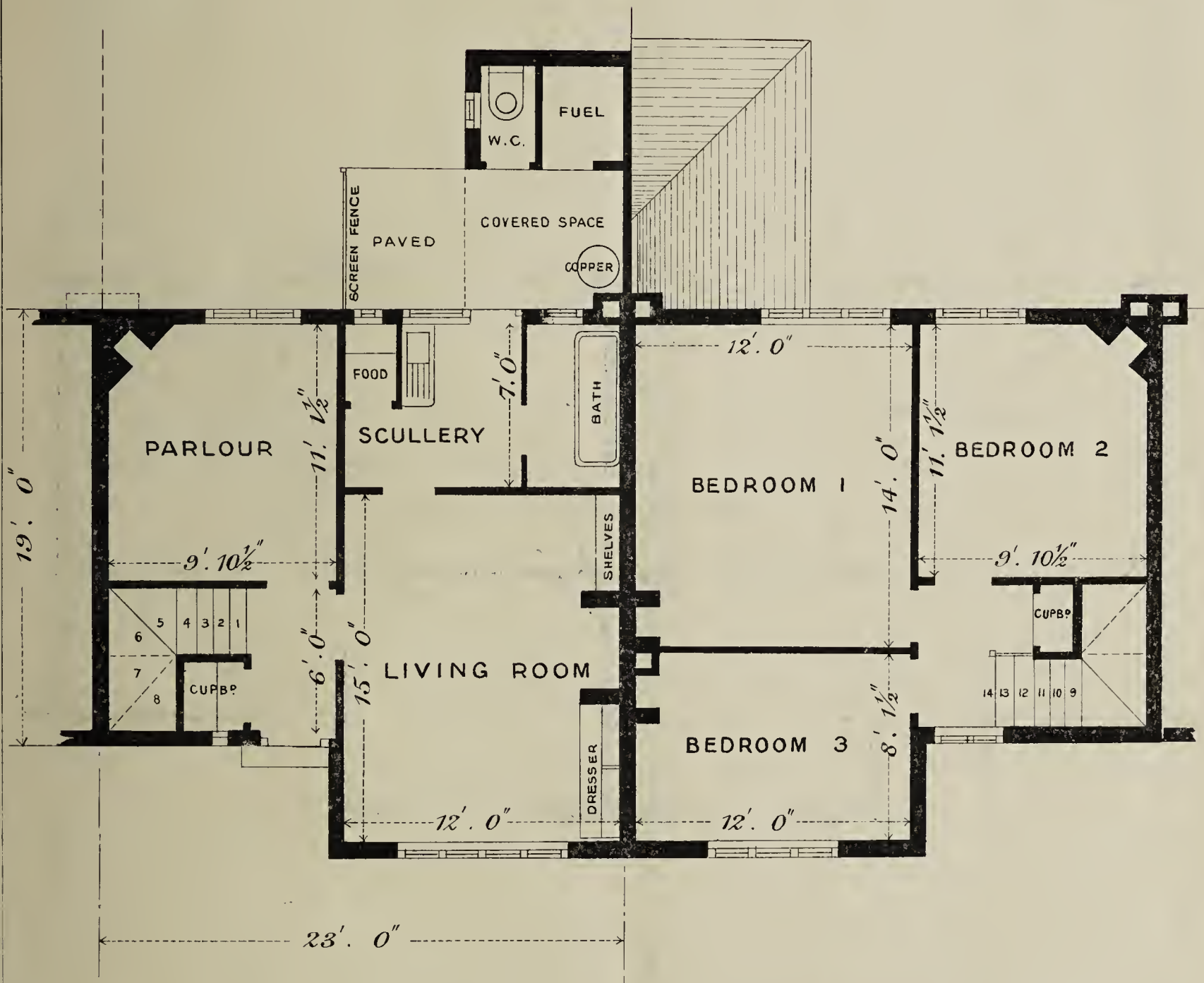


GROUND FLOOR. FIRST FLOOR.



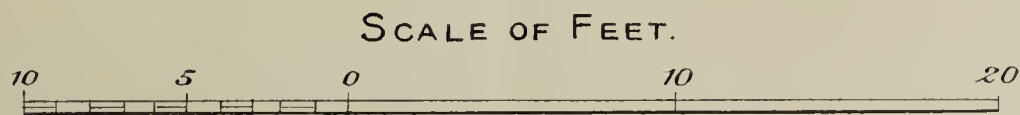
PLAN N° 5.

CUBIC CONTENTS
10,750 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



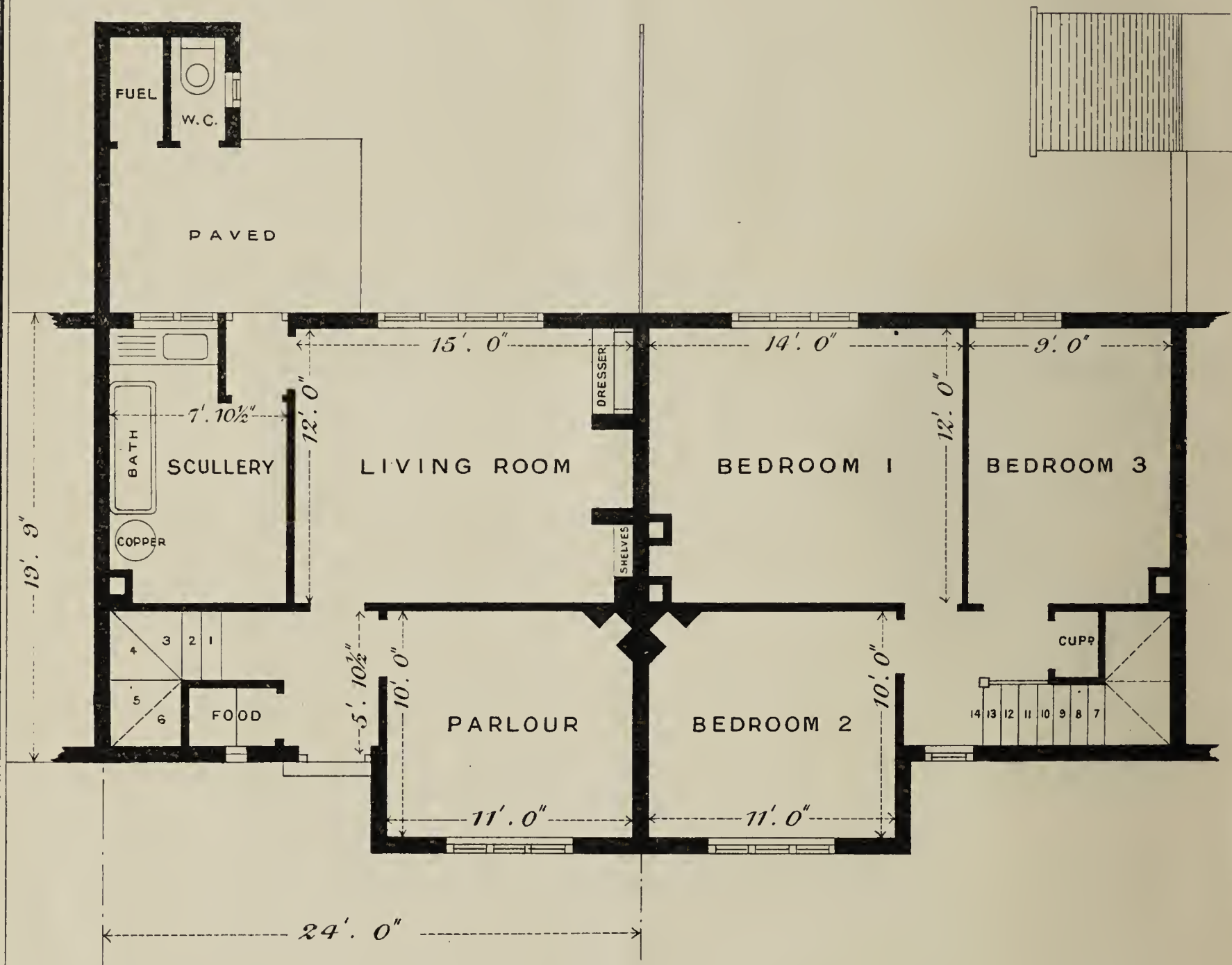
GROUND FLOOR.

FIRST FLOOR.



PLAN N° 6.

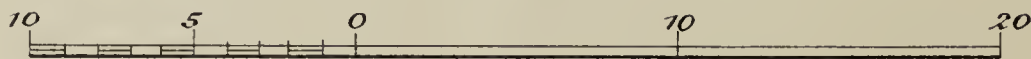
CUBIC CONTENTS
11,300 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



GROUND FLOOR.

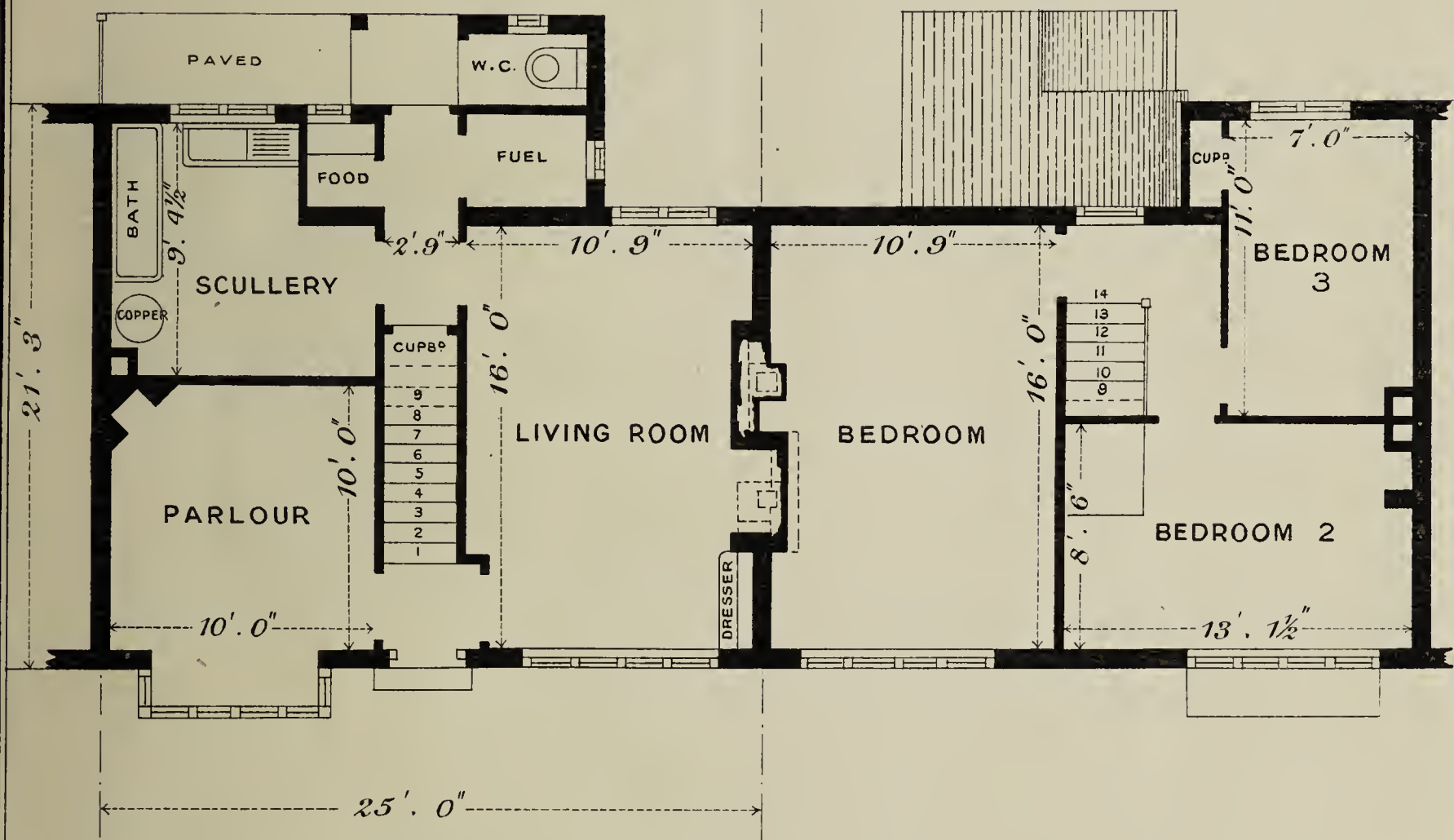
FIRST FLOOR.

SCALE OF FEET.



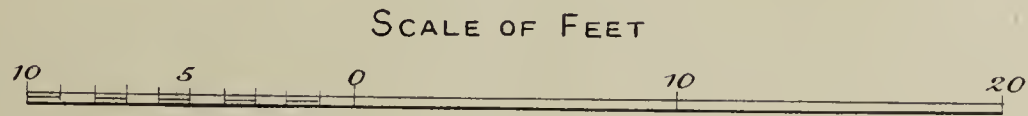
PLAN N^o 7.

CUBIC CONTENTS
10,550 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



GROUND FLOOR.

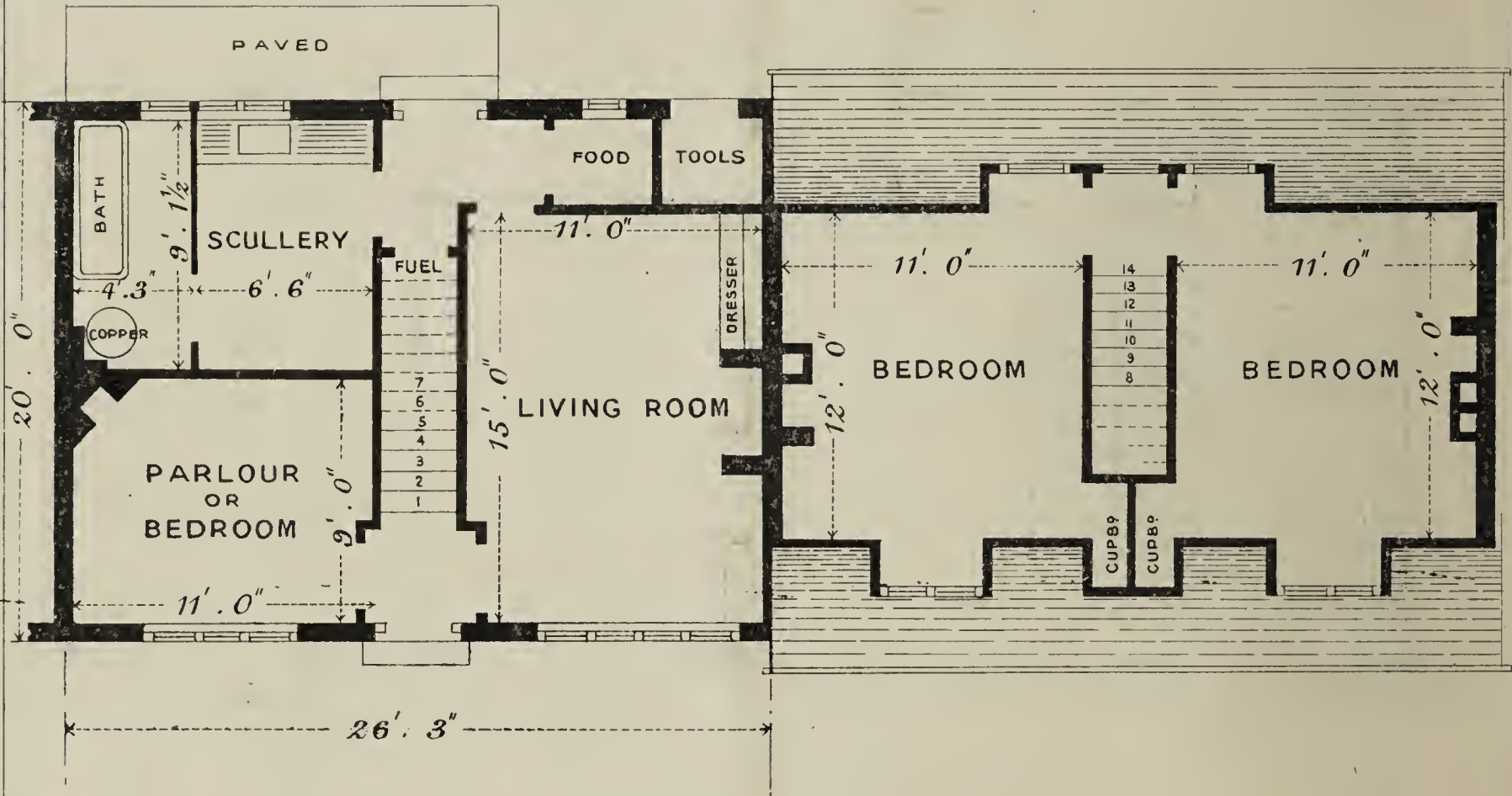
FIRST FLOOR.



PLAN N° 8.

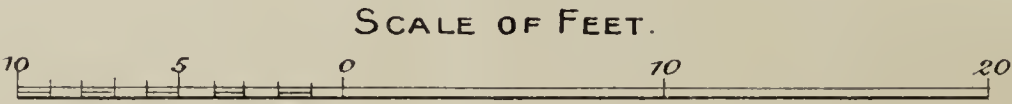
CUBIC CONTENTS
8,900 FEET

(E. C. OUTSIDE)



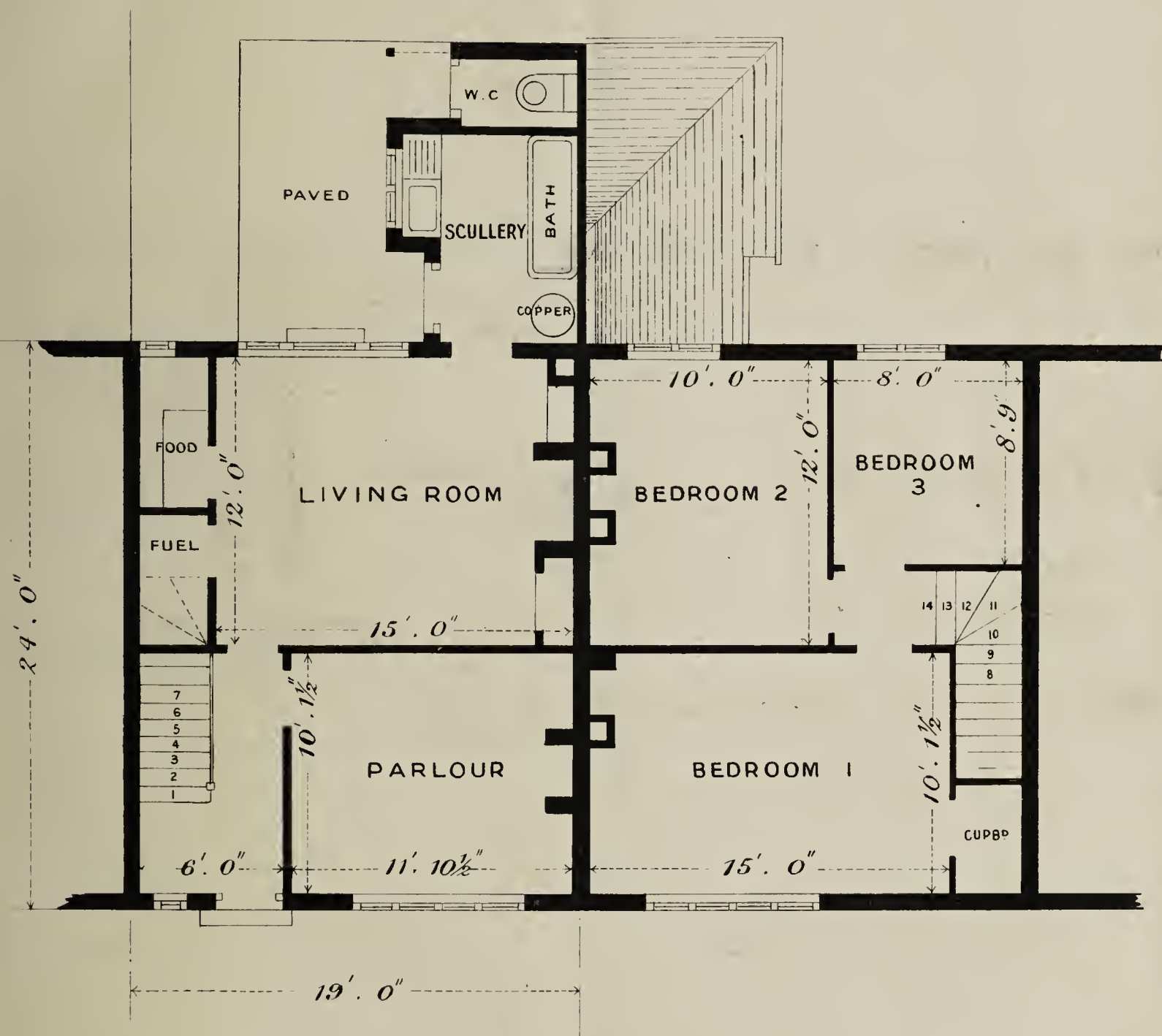
GROUND FLOOR.

FIRST FLOOR.



PLAN N^o 9.

CUBIC CONTENTS
10,200 FEET.
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING

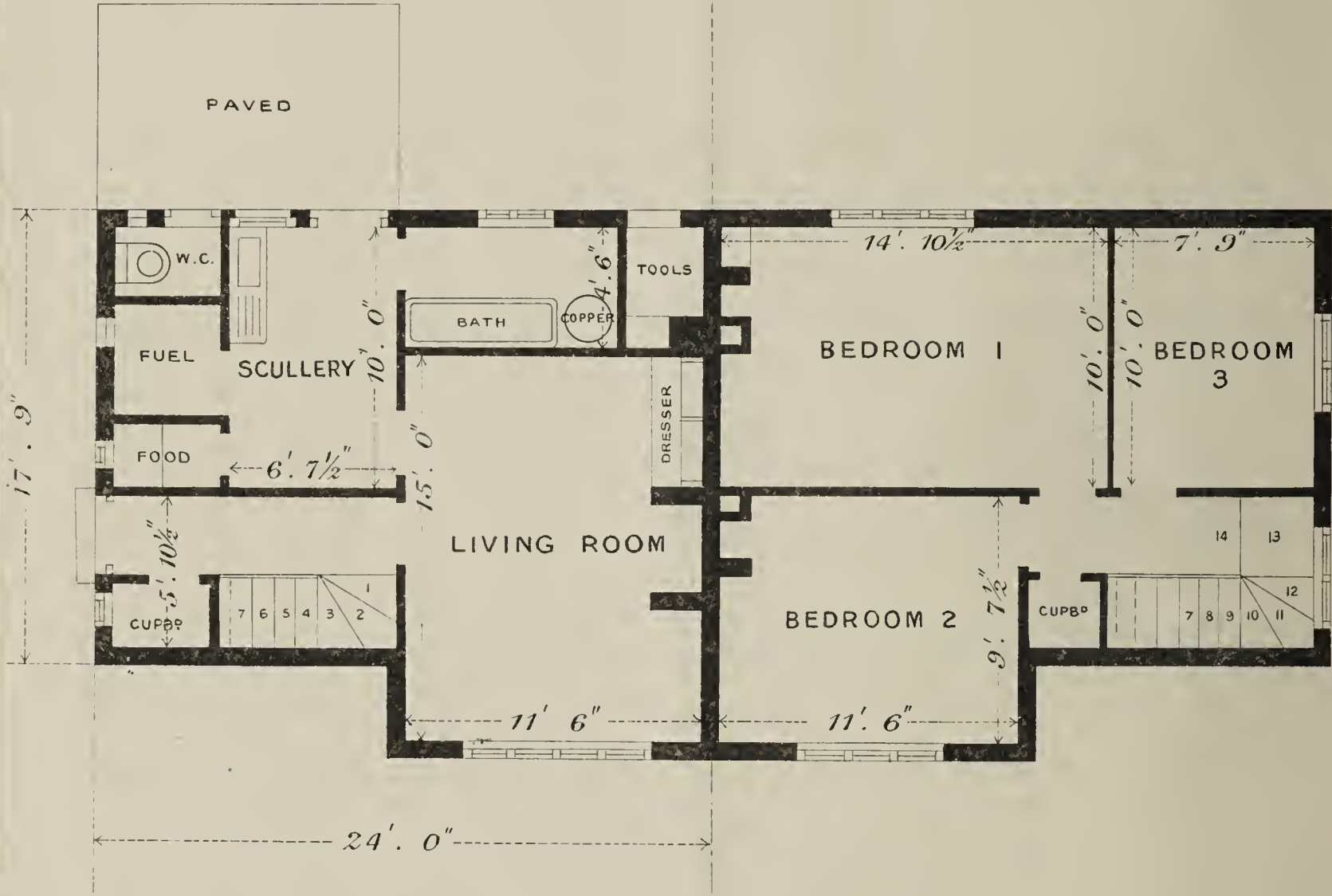


NOVEMBER, 1917.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD
WHITEHALL

PLAN N° 10.

CUBIC CONTENTS
10,100 FEET.



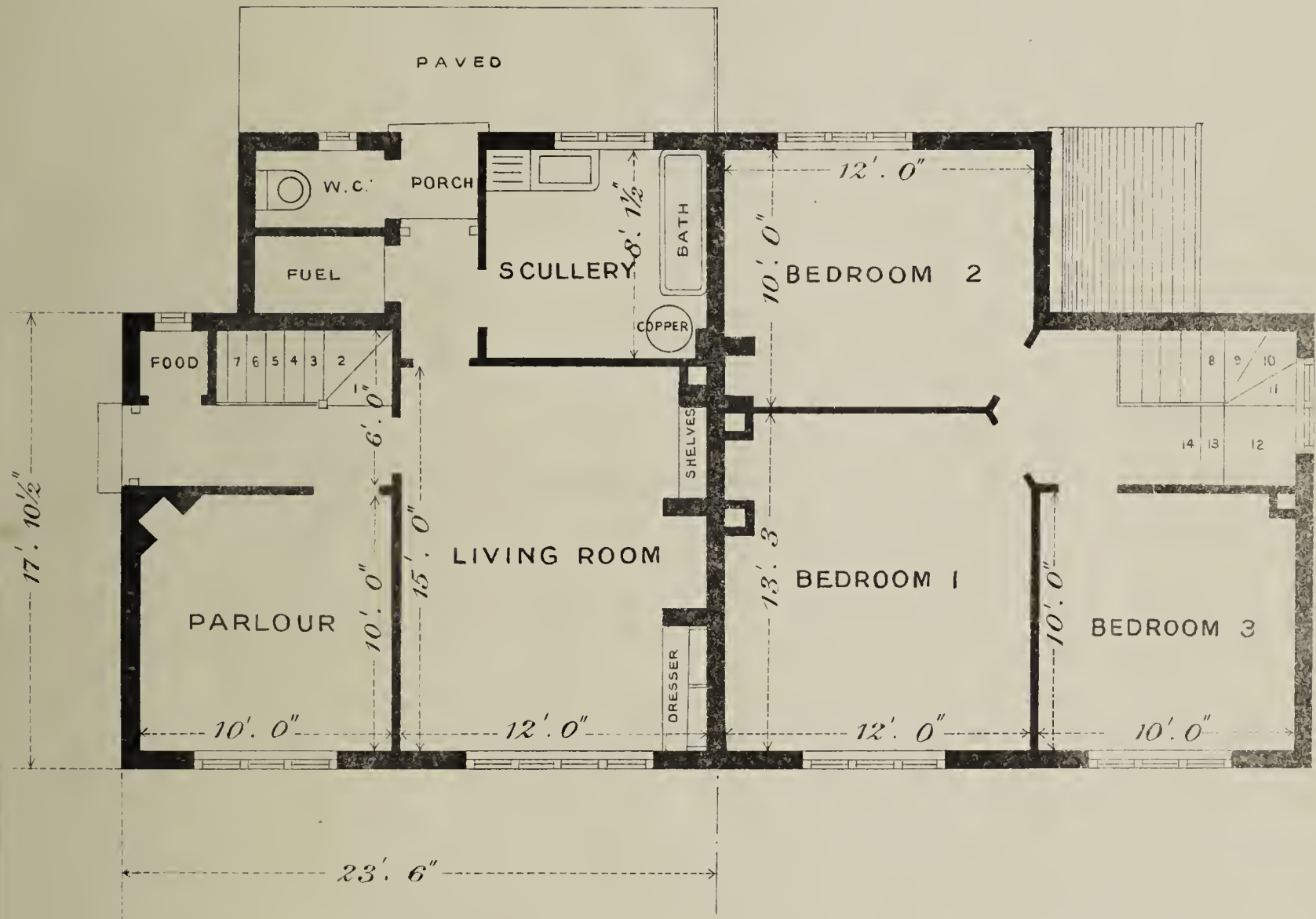
GROUND FLOOR.

FIRST FLOOR.



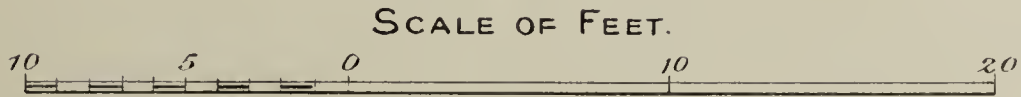
PLAN Nº II.

CUBIC CONTENTS
10,900 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



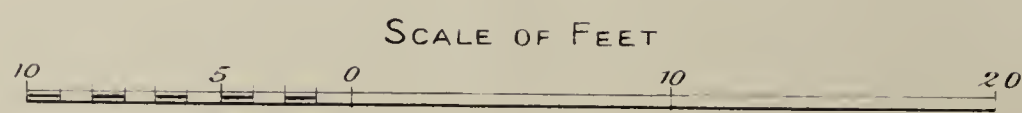
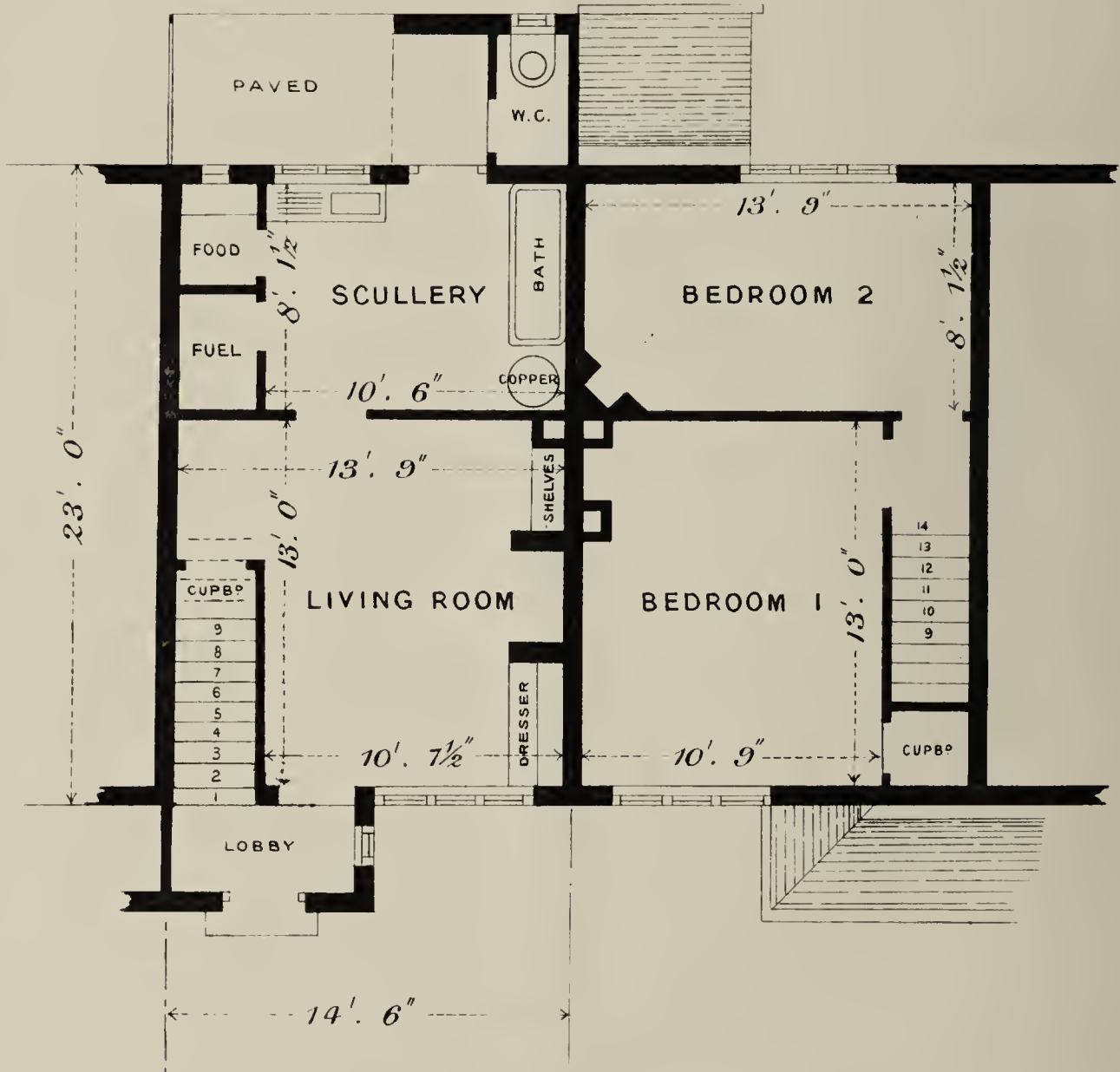
GROUND FLOOR.

FIRST FLOOR.



PLAN N° 12.

CUBIC CONTENTS
7,600 FEET
EXCLUSIVE OF
OUTBUILDING



NOVEMBER 1917.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD
WHITEHALL



3 0112 115501840